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Novi Sad Day 3 wrap: Grøvdal, Guliyev and Storl the star performers

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Norway's Karoline Bjerkeli Grøvdal, Azerbaijan's Ramil Guliyev and Germany's David Storl, all European junior record holders in their specialist events, turned on the style on the third day of the 20th European Athletics Junior Championships in Novi Sad.

Karoline Bjerkeli Grøvdal takes a leap during her victory in the 3000m steeplechase on Saturday at the European Athletics Junior Championships in Novi Sad, Serbia.

All three backed up their claims to be overwhelming favourites by not only getting gold medals but also setting championship records: Grøvdal in the women's 3000m Steeplechase, Guliyev in the men's 200m and Storl in the Shot Put.

It's inevitably almost impossible to choose between the three but perhaps pride of place should go to Storl.

He carried on his recent record breaking ways by winning with a massive championship record of 22.40m. He unleashed his big throw in the first round and the rest of the field had absolutely no answer to his feat.

It was a huge improvement to the championship record of 21.32m set by Croatia's Marin Premeru in Saturday morning's qualifying round and the second best throw ever with a junior 6kg shot, only bettered by his world junior record of 22.73m set in the German town of Osterode on July 14.

Storl then threw 22.07m in the second round and 21.32m in the fourth, fouling his other three attempts.

More than two metres behind, Ukraine's Mykyta Nesetrenko third-round effort of 20.22m, itself an outstanding performance were it not for being completely shaded by Storl's stunning series, got him the silver medal to add to the Discus gold he won on Friday.

The bronze medal went to Germany's Hendrik Muller with 19.63m as Premeru's morning form deserted him and, disappointedly, he could only manage 19.40m for fourth place.

Grøvdal gets second gold

Grøvdal showed no signs of crumbling under the pressure in her event and defended the 3000m Steeplechase title she won two years ago in Hengelo, when she was 17, with a spirited run of 9:43.69.

She finished 70m clear of her nearest rival after laying down the gauntlet from the gun and although Azerbaijan's Layes Abdullayeva gamely gave chase for the first two laps, she was 15m adrift after 1000m, which Grøvdal audaciously passed in 3:10.61.

The blonde Norwegian from Molde, who has a best time of 9:33.19, slowed during the second kilometre but behind her the rest of the field was wilting more and although the chances of her breaking the European junior record had diminished by the time she reached 2000m in 6:25.91, the gap over Abdullayeva had stretched to 50m.

Grøvdal continued to extend her lead over the final two laps and visibly eased off down the home straight, having time to raise her arms in triumph five metres from the line as Abdullayeva had yet to clear the final barrier.

Nevertheless, the Ethiopian-born Abdullayeva continued Azerbaijan's astonishing run of success at these championships - the country having never won a medal at the European Athletics Junior Championships before - by claiming the silver medal in a national junior record of 9:55.95.

Grøvdal will now go for an unprecedented double as she is entered for Sunday's 5000m, which will be run as a straight final.

Azerbaijan acceleration

Nevertheless, the Azerbaijani national anthem did ring out around the Stadium Karadjorde after Ramil Guliyev got his country's second gold medal of the championships with a blistering display of sprinting, coming home in 20.33 and still having time to splay out his arms, in Usain Bolt-esque fashion, 10 metres from the line.

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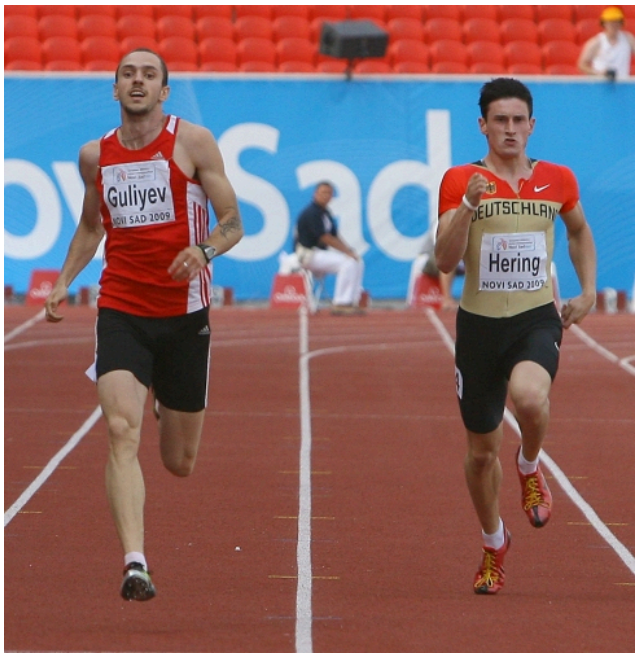
Guliyev improved on the 26-year-old record of 20.37 which East Germany's Jurgen Evers set in 1983 with a performance only he - the European junior record holder with the 20.04 he had run at the recent World University Games in Belgrade - and two other European under-20 sprinters have ever bettered.

Despite being guilty of a false start which might have caused him to hesitate in the blocks, he blazed away when the gun went for the second time and had a yawning lead coming off the turn.

He kept on accelerating until the final 15m when he took the chance to enjoy the celebrations he was denied in the 100m on Friday when he had to settle for the silver medal behind France's rampant Christophe Lemaître, who set a European junior record of 10.04.

Germany's Robert Hering finished second in 20.83, exactly half-a-second behind, a huge margin over this distance.



Ramil Guliyev breezes through to win the men's 200m with a meet-record 20.37.

Azerbaijan then had further success to celebrate later in the day when Hayle Ibrahimov became the first athlete to have two gold medals hung around his neck at these championships, winning the 5000m in 14:01.19 to complement the 10000m title he had won on Thursday.

Ibrahimov lead from the gun but started to increase the pace from 3000m, which he passed in 8:35.41 and, one-by-one, the runners behind him started to drift away.

The last opponent to be broken was Czech Republic's eventual silver medallist Jakub Zivec, who maintained contact until 1110m to go. A second surge from Ibrahimov, just before the 4000m point, saw him shake off the brave Zivec and that was the end of discussion as far as the gold medal was concerned.

Hayle Ibrahimov of Azerbaijan on his way to winning the 5000m gold.

Big day for Belgium

Novi Sad will also go down as a milestone in Belgian athletics history after Anne Zagre won the 100m hurdles in 13.21, following on from the Decathlon victory of Thomas van der Plaetsen on Friday.

Never before at a European Junior Athletics Championships has the country won two gold medals.

A relatively slow start meant Zagre didn't improve upon her national junior record of 13.18 that she set in the first round but it was still an impressive run from the 19-year-old university student.

Belgian Anna Zagre won the 100m hurdles taking her country's medals tally to an unprecedented two golds at the European juniors.

France's Yariatou Toure was ahead after four flights but Zagre overtook her over the fifth hurdle and held her form throughout the second half of the race.

Norway's Isabelle Pedersen, the 2009 IAAF World Youth Championships gold medallist and at 17 still eligible for the next European Junior Athletics Championships, also did well over the second 50m and took the silver medal with 13.49 while Toure hit several of the final hurdles and had to settle for the bronze in 13.52.

Russian roulette over 3000m

One of the most entertaining races of the day came in the women's 3000m as Russia's Yelena Korobkina unleashed a stunning sprint down the home straight to overhaul Great Britain's Kate Avery just 15m from the line and win the gold

medal in a personal best of 9:13.35.

The race was conducted at such a high tempo that the first four home all set personal bests, despite the temperatures still being in the mid-20s and championship distance events often being tactical affairs.

Great Britain's Beth Potter lead through nearly all the first 1000m in a swift 3:06.66 before Azerbaijan's Gezashign Safarova took over at the front at 1100m, with Potter and Serbia's Amela Terzic immediately behind her and five metres clear of another small group of runners.

Safarova surged just before the 2000m mark, passing that point in 6:10.46, in a brief bid to shake off her pursuers but then almost immediately slowed and allowed Avery, her compatriot Louise Small and Korobkina to rejoin the leading trio.

Avery, who took the silver, then audaciously took over the lead with 500m to go with the aim of making a long run for home. She held an advantage of two metres at the bell and extended it further over the next 300m but she was caught by an inspired Korobkina, who was 10m behind coming into the home straight, barely 10 strides before the line.

Romania's Mirela Lavric defended her 800m junior title, covering the two laps of the track in 2:04.12.

Another thrilling contest came when Romania's diminutive Mirela Lavric, like Grøvdal, defended the European junior 800m title she won two years ago, covering two laps of the track in 2:04.12.

The maturity and experience of Lavric, who is also the reigning world junior champion and still has another year in the junior ranks, shone throughout the race as she covered every move made by her opponents.

Germany's Corinna Harrer took the packed field through the first lap in 1:01.65 but Lavric was tucked behind her, and Russia's Yekaterina Zavyalova, in third place.

Zavyalova moved to the front shortly after the bell but Lavric went straight away up onto her shoulder before going past her when coming off the final bend, around the outside in lane two.

Harrer, the slowest bar one in the eight-woman field, then got her second wind down the home straight and caught Zavyalova on the line for a surprise silver medal while the Russian had to settle for third.

Other gold medals on the penultimate day of the 20th European Athletics Junior Championships went to: Spain's David Bustos (men's 1500m), Great Britain's Lawrence Clarke (men's 110m Hurdles), Russia's Sergey Mudrov, (men's High Jump), Germany's Andreas Hofmann (men's Javelin), Russia's Stanislav Yemelyanov (men's 10,000m Walk), the Romania's Andreea Ograeanu (women's 200m), Germany's Martina Schultze (women's Pole Vault).

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